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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000330

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SPEAKER ATTIYAH DISCUSSES UPCOMING
LEGISLATION

REF: A. HILLAH 20

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 264

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Charles O. Blaha for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Khalid al-Attiah (Shi'a coalition, Independent), First Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR), told Dep PolCouns on January 31 that he was pleased with the roll-out of the Baghdad security plan (BSP) to date, particularly the government's insistence that it would target anyone who operated outside the law regardless of sect. He stressed the importance of the media component to ensure Baghdad residents were apprised of the plan and of developing means to coordinate between residents and security forces. Al-Attiah claimed that the Kurds were holding up the law of governorates not organized into regions in order to pressure other groups to implement Article 140. He identified two red lines for the Shi'a on deBaathification but indicated that Shi'a coalition members in the CoR were not currently engaged in the deBaathification revision process. End summary.

Garnering Support for the BSP

[1](#)2. (C) Dep PolCouns opened the meeting by noting the positive role al-Attiah played in proposing a vote of support for the general principles of the BSP in the CoR (ref B) and asking for his assessment of the plan to date. Al-Attiah replied that he was pleased with two issues in particular. First, he pointed to the insistence of the Iraqi government in stating that there would be no tolerance of anyone who operated outside of the law, regardless of sect. The GOI's seriousness, he said, had convinced the Sadrists that it was not in their interest to oppose the plan and was related to "the departure of Muqtada." (Note: Muqtada al-Sadr is rumored to be in Iran. End note.) Second, al-Attiah praised the recent security operation in Najaf (ref A) as a sign that the government would not make any exceptions, even for Shi'a extremists. Dep PolCouns remarked that the operation showed that the post-Provincial Iraqi Control security system worked: ISF took the lead, called for MNF support as necessary, and together helped protect Iraqi citizens engaged in lawful religious activities.

[1](#)3. (C) Agreeing with Dep PolCouns on the necessity of setting up good channels of communication and coordination between Baghdad's residents and the BSP's leaders, al-Attiah stressed the importance of the media component. He said he had recently encouraged Grand Ayatollah Sistani's office to issue a statement in support of the plan and calling for cooperation with it, but that Sistani's advisors had declined to do so because it might be perceived in a sectarian way. Instead, Sistani's advisors noted that Sistani clearly supported the main principles of the plan, namely that there

should be no violence or carrying of weapons outside the framework of the state without exception, and promised "practical support." While not liking to differentiate based on sect, al-Attiyah continued, he observed that the Sunni political parties had not yet offered a ringing endorsement of the plan or encouraged their constituents to support it. He said that Sunnis' trust had to be won through the plan's implementation. Finally, he remarked that he had no information beyond what was in the media on the plan discussed by Vice President Tarik al-Hashemi (Sunni, IIP) and CoR member Baha al-Araji (Shi'a, Sadrist) to set up joint security committees and said that he had no confidence or trust in al-Araji.

Potential Solutions to the Quorum Problem

¶4. (C) Moving to the CoR schedule, al-Attiyah said he expected the next CoR session to be February 4 rather than February 3 as previously announced, as the Kurds had called to say that limited transportation options might prevent them from returning February 3. He said he hoped the budget would be passed February 4 and noted that there would be further negotiations on outstanding issues on February 1. Turning to the issue of lack of quorum in the CoR, al-Attiyah remarked that he expected the Speaker would continue to read the names of those absent at the beginning of the session and agreed with Dep PolCouns that publishing the names in a newspaper at intervals might be more effective than reading them. Turning to broader solutions, Al-Attiyah mentioned the possibility of lowering the percentage required for quorum from 50 percent plus one to one third through constitutional amendment, as well as amending the CoR's law on replacement of members to mandate replacement of those who failed to attend a minimum

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threshold of sessions.

Kurds Holding Up Governorates Law

¶5. (C) Al-Attiyah said that he would push for a second reading of the law of governorates not organized into regions before the CoR went into recess (which he anticipated would be after the February 8 session, vice February 10), but that "it depends on the Kurds." He argued that the Kurds planned to hold up this law in order to put pressure on other groups to implement Article 140. "The Kurds are saying they do not want to finish the law of the governorates until the boundaries of the governorates are determined. It is not logical, because you can define the boundaries after you pass the law, but they are using it as a pressure point." Al-Attiyah said the CoR would set a date for provincial elections after passing the law of governorates not organized into regions.

DeBaathification: Shi'a Red Lines

¶6. (C) Asked by Dep PolCouns what Shi'a coalition needed to see in a new deBaathification law, al-Attiya gave two red lines. First, he said that the constitution's current ban on the Baath party must continue: "Given the Baath party history, we do cannot allow them to enter the political process." Second, he said that Baath party members who had committed crimes, perhaps 1,500 individuals, should be prosecuted in the courts. The rest, he said, should be allowed to return to positions in the civil service or receive their pensions. Asked by Dep PolCouns if any CoR members from Itilaf were engaged in revising deBaathification legislation, al-Attiyah said that Ahmed Chalabi and his committee had the lead on that issue. (Comment: Al-Attiyah's response confirms what we believe from asking

other Itilaf CoR members about deBaathification, namely, that they are not engaged on the issue with other parties or their own rank and file at present. End comment.)

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